

# TV & Radio Equal Top Record Sales

By KAY GARDELLA

YOU TUNE IN a Burt Bacharach ABC special and the composer casually introduces you to the theme song of his forthcoming musical score for the film, "Lost Horizon." Like dripping water, one song at a time is introduced, and then suddenly the cast album hits the record stands, the radio blasts out all the new Bacharach-Hal David tunes and the film premieres.

The media mix is so skillful it's hard to determine which comes first or what medium in the end is responsible for that coveted golden record sale. But one man who has his finger on the pulse of the record industry, and who can spell out the facts in 1,000,000 copies, is Larry Utall, president of Bell Records, who says:

"Without radio it's still impossible to make a hit. It's the interrelation between radio and television, or radio and films, or all three, that puts the sales into the record class," says Utall, whose company is the recording arm for Columbia Pictures.

"Long before 'Lost Horizon' premieres," says Utall, "the Bacharach-David music will be making the radio-TV rounds. The sound track album, which we have, will be on the record stands, played by the deejays, and the Fifth Dimension will have cut a single for us of one of the tunes, 'Living Together, Loving Together.'"

## Radio Rounds First

"But," adds the bearded executive, "when those records really begin to sell is when you're driving into town in your car and listen to 'Lost Horizon' or the other songs from the album. Sure, Burt helps bring the music to the public through his television shows, but that's not enough. Radio is, in the end, the catalyst that puts it across the 'goal line.'"

According to Utall, the sound track album will be circulated first. Then, he said, Bell will wait for radio reaction to the individual numbers. People call the stations up, for instance, requesting certain songs from the album be played, or Side II, etc. "From this," he said, "we can tell which numbers might be worth cutting as singles, so, in addition to the Fifth Dimension's 'Living Together, Loving Together,' we may pull

other songs out of the album and cut other singles."

Utall does not foresee television becoming a single force in the sale of records the way radio has been over the years. Says he: "It has been effective in special situations, like the Bacharach one, but this is attributed in part to the personality of the composer and the fact he has his own television show. But I don't personally think television will be used more and more to peddle music."

The executive says this despite the fact that he has been instrumental in earning ABC's the Partridge Family a half-dozen golden records and turned its star, David Cassidy, into a top recording star. But again, says Utall, the Partridge Family television series is unique. "It's the only network show that has pop music thoroughly integrated into it."

## The Monkees Started It

The Monkees, which is no longer on television, started the musical trend in television. Then along came the Screen Gems television series, the Partridge Family, which is a story in itself. But we'll let Utall tell it:

"At least one or two new songs are introduced on the series every week," he said, "but radio in the end is what has turned them into hits. Screen Gems, of course, is the television arm of Columbia Pictures, like we are the record arm. So the television series provided the vehicle through which we were able to create a group called the Partridge Family, with David Cassidy the lead singer."

"Let's face it," said Utall, "if television alone could break a record we'd have 52 hits a year from the series. As it has turned out, we've earned two golden record singles—'I Think I Love You' and 'Doesn't Someone Want to Be Wanted?'—plus five albums. And radio was the medium instrumental in making this possible."

Utall said that "I Think I Love You" was already a hit before the song premiered on the ABC series Thanksgiving day of 1970. It was No. 1 on the record charts in September before its television bow and it was radio that promoted it. Television is the supplementary vehicle.



Larry Utall is flanked by Burt Bacharach (l.) and David Cassidy.

"In fact," he went on, "we released the record at Bell as early as July to see what would happen. Our first big break was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where it was first played. The next market we hit was San Jose, Calif., and then Seattle, Wash., down to Portland, Ore. These places were reported favorable to the record in a record analysis letter, which the industry uses, and after that we caught on. San Francisco was the next big market, and before we knew it we were No. 1 and David Cassidy was a known singer before the television series started."

Radio has been and will continue to be the record industry's greatest tool, insists Utall, who says he has an intuitive ear for a song's hit potential. His shrewd, inventive expertise in merchandising and marketing, together with his astute judgment of the music market, has made him a prominent figure in the record industry and a reliable spokesman.

A Mitch Miller hit recording of "Let Me Go Lover" in an early Joan Davis mystery drama on television fired up everyone's imagination and for a while,

reports Utall, television was viewed as another Tin Pan Alley. But the balloon soon burst, and it became apparent that one success does not necessarily guarantee another.

"In the case of 'Brian's Song,'" explained Utall, "the theme by Michel Legrand was beautiful, but the original sound track for the film didn't work from our point of view. So what I did was call Legrand up in Paris and ask him to go into a recording studio and cut another record. He did and that was the one we sold for the film album, and played on radio."

There are approximately 200 new records released weekly, and maybe one or two become hits, so scoring isn't easy, insists Utall, who adds: "It takes the entire country to make a hit record." In the case of a Broadway or Off-Broadway production this is also true.

"For instance," said Utall, "the cast album for 'Godspell' was played on radio, singles were also circulated, and the entire cast of the show appeared on NBC-TV's Today show. It was this potent combination that put the album in the Top Ten." Utall singles out the Today show as one of the few that can affect the sales of records.